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SELECTED REACTIONS	OF SATELLITE	OFFICIALS	
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FOLLOWING THE	STALIN DENIGE	RATION	
JUNE 1956	6 - JUNE 1957		•
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I. Introduction and Summary

- A. This study was undertaken to gauge the extent of personal crisis, confusion, and disorientation among representative Satellite officials and Communist party members residing outside the Orbit that resulted from the Stalin denigration. Of primary concern are the individual reactions of prominent party members to statements made by Khrushchev and Mikoyan during the 20th CPSU Congress in February, 1956, and to the "secret" Khrushchev report that was released by the U.S. State Department in June 1956. Reactions to the events in October and November 1956 are included. In view of the recent Soviet campaign against Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, et al., the study may serve as an aid in estimating reactions to the continuing de-Stalinization campaign.
- B. This study is based on statements made privately by certain Satellite personnel while on missions abroad for their governments. The statements were obtained through various sensitive channels. For the most part, the individuals quoted are still active and trusted party members. Also, with few exceptions, these Satellite party members represent a middle echelon of party officials who are active in a commercial or diplomatic capacity outside the Soviet orbit.
- C. In order to condense the mass of material used in making this study, it has been necessary to report only selected parts of total reactions. Some quoted passages have been included to give a more lively picture of the depth of feeling that was produced by the Stalin denigration and the events that followed. These remarks were frequently made under private and intimate circumstances.
- D. Prevalent throughout the conversations was the expression of hostile opinion toward the 1956 Soviet leadership. Even after twelve years of indoctrination, terror, and discipline, Satellite party members were not afraid to express their candid opinions, under certain circumstances.

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- E. Satellite party officials confirmed the deplorable economic status that their leaders had created. After twelve years of power, these officials appeared in unanimous agreement that living conditions had not been significantly improved; the period had been characterized by low wages and poor working conditions, and tremendous capital expansion had resulted in continuous shortage of basic consumer goods. Their condemnation of party leaders was not based on any profound Marxian logic or abstract analysis of the current crisis. In simple terms, usually based on their own observations and experience, they concluded that their leaders had been so bent on building socialism that they ignored the basic needs and desires of the people. Each day, through their contacts in the homeland and their residence in the West, they could see a disparity between Communist theory and practice. From reading Western newspapers, they also were in a position to reflect on the injustices, the propaganda, and the inefficiency caused by their leaders.
- These officials appeared most disturbed by the embarrassing and unfavorable position in which they were often placed. Trade officials openly admitted that their system had forced them to be at a disadvantage in conducting trade relations with the West. They appeared resigned to their fate as helpless victims who are required to carry out the orders of their superiors even when they know that every rule of sound economics is being wiolated. They considered it ironic that they were often required to export the very items that were badly needed at home. (Even the merchandise that is finally exported is usually of such poor quality that it is hardly worthy of internal consumption.) They admitted that they were often required to export products which were imported only a few months before. Very often, they found themselves competing with other Satellites, each trying to undercut the price of the other, in order to sell their products in Western markets. All this caused many of them to wonder whether their leaders were not deliberately delivering them into the hands of the capitalists. In the midst of this economic chaos, they conceded that something was wrong. Many of them saw the necessity of giving more freedom to the people in order to produce

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more and better goods and to break the present economic deadlock.

- G. Nevertheless, reactions offer little evidence that a large number of party members were abandoning the Communist ideology and turning to capitalism for salvation. Particularly among the cadre members, there was still a blind faith in the basic soundness of Communist ideology. Privately they still maintained that they must remain blood enemies of the West, even though they were forced to show the outward friendliness of "peaceful coexistence." When pressed, many of the Satellite party officials would still maintain that Soviet diplomacy is better than capitalist diplomacy.
- H. Several of the reactions revealed nostalgia for the past, in contrast with the present indecision and confusion. The party leadership had no ready solution to the then current crisis. Even such questions as whether the deceased Stalin was a genius or an idiot could not be resolved. Opinions were hopelessly divided. Some party members blamed the current Soviet leaders for having allowed too much freedom too fast. Another segment blamed Stalin for the crisis, but at the same time believed that the leaders who shared his power were equally at fault. Still others maintained that Stalin was a genius and blamed the new Soviet leaders for lacking his power and political insight. The only fundamental point on which there appeared to have been any widespread agreement was that the Stalin denigration was handled very crudely.
- I. The reaction of a Polish official reveals the profound feelings that became stirred and how Party members began to analyze Stalin's downfall in terms of their own experience. Stalin had been demoted to another "god that failed." The once great genius, according to this official, had now been reduced to a complete idiot. For not only did Stalin corrupt himself, but he corrupted his followers and even the Communist ideology. In attempting to create a world after his own image, he distorted and rearranged everything according to a preconceived ideal of his own. First he eliminated his opposition. Then he proceeded to organize a dictator-

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ship that tolerated no criticism of his policies. In the end, he had so arranged and manipulated everything that he was either feared or worshipped by everyone. No one dared to offend his vanity, question his wisdom, or offer criticism. He was protected from all unfavorable criticism, to the point that he became isolated in a world of his own. In this world he lost contact not only with the masses, but even with his own Party. Science was distorted to meet his approval, history was rewritten to make a hero, and a ruinous economic policy was tolerated in order to build a heavy industry. Only after Stalin's death was there anyone brave enough to label his insanity "cult of personality."

J. Many of the comments and opinions reflected in this study suggest that there is still a strong current within the Communist movement demanding that the hypocrisy and deceit that was institutionalized under Stalin be removed, and that corrective measures be taken immediately. Otherwise, the party must face the danger of becoming completely detached from the masses. Although the nature of the desired changes was not always clear, the attitudes of Satellite personnel tended toward immediate adjustments in the standard of living, greater independence from the Soviets, more freedom inside and outside the party, and a change in political leadership. As one Bulgarian official warned, "Some day the people will ask for an accounting, and then you'll see what will happen. We have been torturing our people, and now we have lost them."

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II. Bulgarian Reactions

The following summaries and conclusions are based on a selection of conversations among members of a Bulgarian economic mission abroad. These conversations took place during the period 4 April 1956 to 15 May 1957, and represent views and opinions expressed by middle echelon Bulgarian Communist Party members on the existing economic situation and events following the 20th CPSU Congress in Moscow. For purposes of analysis, conversations are summarized in four parts. Parts A, B, and C cover the period prior to the uprising in Hungary. Part D summarizes the conversations during and after the Hungarian events.

Part A covers the period between 4 and 21 April, during the time the first significant reactions to the Stalin denigration began to appear. Between 2 and 6 April a meeting of the Bulgarian Central Committee Plenum took place in Bulgaria, in which Chervenkov was severely criticized for "building a cult of personality." These criticisms were subsequently enlarged in a number of explanatory meetings which were held in Bulgaria between 12-13 April. The meetings were conducted on the district level, with leading Central Committee personalities participating in the discussions. Chervenkov was accused of committing a number of errors, among them the following: 1) choking criticism within the Party for the purpose of building a "cult of personality"; 2) promoting careerists in the Party; 3) perverting "socialist legality"; 4) impeding friendly relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia; and 5) economic blundering. interesting aspect of this affair was the fact that while Chervenkov was being called to task for errors associated with the "cult of personality, " hardly a word was uttered in Party meetings of Stalin's guilt of the same crime, as initially brought into focus by Comrades Mikoyan and Khrushchev at the 20th CPSU Congress in February 1956. The criticism of Chervenkov was not without its foreseen results, and on 16 April 1956 Premier Vulko Chervenkov had to "resign" from his government position. He was succeeded by Anton Yugov. It is within this framework that the conversations in Part A are summarized.

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A. From 4 April to 21 April 1956

- 1. The conversations clearly indicated that, for the most part, members of the Bulgarian mission were not very well informed on the political events taking place in Bulgaria. Their primary source of information appeared to be Western newspapers, particularly leftist French, Italian, and Swiss, Yugoslav newspapers, visiting members of other missions, and occasional reports which were sent to the legation through diplomatic channels. Their first knowledge that changes were being considered in Bulgaria came by chance from a visiting Bulgarian ambassador, who passed on some information he read in a French newspaper. This was the news that Chervenkov would resign and that prior to doing this, he would go to Moscow. This news came twelve days before Chervenkov actually resigned. Part of the information apparently was faulty, for there was no evidence to confirm that Chervenkov made the trip to Moscow.
- 2. In reading foreign newspapers one of the delegates translated the more important articles for the group. The group would then make various comments, depending on the content of the article. In most cases, these comments seemed to adhere closely to the official Party explanations, but on some occasions the remarks would be sarcastic, ironical, humorous or even outright equivocal. Members seemed to express a preference for the French and Italian papers, feeling that they were more informative and critical than their own Bulgarian newspapers. They did not receive the Bulgarian newspapers regularly, and even when they did arrive, they were about ten days late. It was not known whether members of the delegation read non-Bulgarian papers with the approval of their superiors in Sofia, or whether it was a practice that was tolerated but not officially condoned. From all indications, it seemed obvious that the officials were devoting a considerable amount of time to reading these Western newspapers and were becoming fairly well informed of the growing criticism of Stalin that was appearing in the press. For example, they were aware that Khrushchev and

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Mikoyan made some unflattering remarks about Stalin at the 20th CPSU Congress; that Malenkov made some critical statements against Stalin when he returned from England; that the People's Republic of China commented on Stalin's errors; and that Togliatti made some sharp criticisms of the Soviet Union. During the early part of April 1956 the Bulgarian economic officials would read these articles without making any major comments.

- 3. It was not until the 20th of April, during a weekly meeting of the local Party cell, that the subject of the implications of the 20th CPSU Congress was brought up for discussion. This was the same day that the legation received a news bulletin which had some critical reference to the Stalin denigration. The conversations of the economic mission personnel became a little more frank when Stalin was mentioned in following private discussions. However, during the local Party meeting there was great reluctance on the part of the participants to volunteer to talk on the subject. Many of them excused themselves by saying that they were not prepared to discuss the situation.
- 4. The officials were initially without any guidance as to what position to take on the Chervenkov affair, or on other political affairs within their Party. When it was becoming increasingly evident that Chervenkov would have to be dropped, one of the younger members of the mission could not understand this turn of events. The older members of the Party seemed more resigned to the situation and accepted it as inevitable but ironical. The group as a whole viewed the Chervenkov resignation with certain reservations. They all agreed that he was popular in the Party, highly intelligent, extremely capable and "cultured." The latter quality apparently was something that was considered rare among Bulgarian Party leaders.
- 5. There was, however, general agreement that Chervenkov was being made a scapegoat for errors committed by the Party itself. But what was most disturbing to the mission members

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was the humiliating way in which Chervenkov resigned -- in front of the Yugoslav delegation in the Sofia Parliament. The only substantial criticism against Chervenkov at this time seemed to be the fact that he considered himself an expert on everything. The mission members thought that although he was an unusually gifted man, he did have certain limitations. They refused to believe at this time that Chervenkov was guilty of the "cult of personality." In their opinion, other members of the Party were just as much to blame, for they were the ones who had showered all their attention on Chervenkov. Further, they felt that on a number of occasions Chervenkov personally opposed the glorification. At most, they expected that he would be required to criticize himself, accept the new line, and make appropriate apologies for his past treatment of Tito. The fact that he was forced to go all the way and "resign" came as a surprise. One of the older Party members of the mission offered the opinion that Chervenkov, like Stalin, could be made or broken, and that tomorrow another Chervenkov would be made, and perhaps one even as genial as Stalin. Other members of the mission had certain reservations about this statement, but all seemed to agree with another statement by this individual when he said, "We must criticize but never expose ourselves. "

6. From the general tone of the conversation and from several remarks which were made, a distinct impression is left that the mission officials were opposed to the forced acceptance of Yugoslavia as a friendly neighbor. When one of the members read a statement in a newspaper that Bulgarians have always liked and admired Yugoslavs, the group broke into laughter. They considered equally humorous a Yugoslav account which stated that the Yugoslav delegation caused great enthusiasm when it entered the Bulgarian Parliament. Other unflattering remarks were made to the effect that the Yugoslavs themselves indulged in a Tito cult and that they were a backward country in comparison to Bulgaria.

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- There were a number of indications that the discussion of political matters had intensified criticism of the deteriorating Bulgarian economic situation. Top Party leaders were the targets of considerable sarcasm and joking, although no one official seemed to be singled out more than another. These jokes and puns were made openly and appeared to be greatly enjoyed. Typical jokes concerned the shortcomings of the Party, the economic crisis, and the vanity of Party leaders. For example, during a discussion in which it was stated that higher officials were sabotaging the economic program and then blaming it on lower officials, the following joke was told by one of the members: A gypsy from Turnovo, Bulgaria, was asked to join the Party. The gypsy, however, refused the invitation with appropriate apologies by saying that he was too poor, and thus could not live up to the reputation of a "good" Communist. Another anecdote concerned a Communist who was asked what reward he wanted for his loyal years of past service to the Party. The Communist answered, "All I want is to be returned to the good old times. " The frankness of some of these jokes would indicate that Party members were getting bolder and were beginning to "open up." One of the officials told the following anecdote to his associates: When a high official was asked why there was no improvement since 1944, he replied, "The Communists don't know how to govern yet. All they know how to do now is sabotage, for they lack experience." This type of humor was in evidence when the mission officials discussed the problem of whose protrait should be hung in their offices. Now that Chervenkov had resigned, they wondered if anyone who replaced him would be permanent. One member suggested that they hang a poster of Dimitrov; since he was already dead they felt that it would be quite unlikely that any future changes in posters would have to be made.
- 8. One of the more serious topics of discussion was the economic situation, and the inability of the Party's leaders to improve it. The officials were unusually outspoken on the subject and made no pretense of curbing their disgust. Up to this point, their criticism was largely restricted to blaming the top leadership

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for the economic failures. All the officials seemed to be in agreement that the Bulgarian economic situation was at its lowest: ebb since the Communists took over in Bulgaria. Among the more blatant shortcomings pointed out were: 1) intolerably low wages for industrial and agricultural workers; 2) high cost of food products and durable consumer goods; 3) poor quality of products; 4) poor planning and distribution of goods; 5) overconcentration on industrial expansion; 6) inept utilization of workers. were only a short list of the large number of failures attributed to the leadership of the Party. To these officials it seemed a paradox that the Party had been unable to solve the economic problems after being in power for twelve years. On a number of occasions they openly admitted that the Bulgarian worker had been better off before the Communists took over. However, this indictment did not seem to go into any detailed analysis or discussion of why the Communist economic program had failed. In typical Marxist fashion, the officials blamed their leaders for not having 1) faced the problem squarely, 2) made the necessary organizational changes, and 3) established closer ties with the masses. From either their own experience, or that of some family member, they were able to bolster their arguments with an abundance of proof. This experience convinced them that the present leadership was in need of younger and more intelligent men who were not afraid to criticize and make decisions on their own. From their own experience they also knew that lesser officials did not dare to criticize their superiors openly, and that there was a general reluctance on the part of all officials to take too much initiative for fear of being blamed for something. This, they felt, posed a real dilemma, resulting in no one's wanting to assume responsibility, in one layer of bureaucrats blaming the next until it reached the top and then could be pushed no further. But even at the top, these Party members conceded that statistics were falsified and deceptions were perpetrated. They knew from firsthand accounts that peasants had not always "volunteered" to join collectives; that agricultural and industrial quotas were often unrealistic; that crops often had to be sown on unproductive land.

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Nor, to these officials, was it a revelation that they wereforced to make trade agreements that clearly were not in the best interests of the Bulgarian worker. Somehow, as if by magic, they felt that this could all be changed with proper leadership and the correct application of Marxist-Leninist theory. The fact that twelve years had already gone by and that their progress to the promised utopia had deteriorated rather than improved, seemed merely to intensify their convictions that something had to be done soon. For the present, they appeared to be at a loss to determine how the problems could be solved.

- The general candor of the conversations indicated that certain of the officials were now, perhaps for the first time since they joined the Party, beginning to examine and think about some of the events that were difficult to explain in the past. They raised such questions as why their ministers had never gone outside the Orbit; why they never went to the West to talk; and why these problems had not been brought up before. One member, as if making an unusual revelation for the first time, stated, "We acted on instructions from above. " Another member added, "We now start to understand the problem and everything is becoming clear, but then it appeared to us that it was normal and right. " A third member concluded, "We were then satisfied with the general declarations about peaceful coexistence." Such statements suggest the possibility that many Party officials were beginning to see through the cover of the Soviet pattern, even though there was some question as to how deep this type of analysis went. Sometimes their analyses brought some peculiar conclusions. When one official commented that Israel was a bourgeois country without freedom, another member replied, "You can imagine how it was there when even in a democratic country like Bulgaria, Chervenkov was able to establish a dictatorship."
- 10. Considerable discussion was also devoted to the problem of rehabilitating former Communists. The first information these officials received that Traycho Kostov and his friends would be

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rehabilitated came from a visiting Bulgarian minister, who said that he had read the news in a French newspaper. All members of the delegation expressed favorable comments regarding such a step, but felt that the rehabilitation should not be at the expense of Georgi Dimitrov. One member expressed the opinion that "they all had been boiled in the same kettle, but those who had lighted the fire were still in power." Members also agreed that the responsibility for the original accusations should be determined and appropriate action taken. They expressed concurrence with a newspaper article which indicated that now that the Kostov situation had been clarified, perhaps diplomatic relations could be resumed with the United. States. A few days after these comments were made, the officials read in one of their newspapers that the former Security Chief, Ivan Raykov, and twenty of his subordinates had been arrested and accused of obtaining false confessions and preparing the false trials of 1949 and 1950. prompted one member to comment, "They are already looking for scapegoats!"

B. From 21 April to 20 July 1956

Part B covers the period during which the Bulgarian officials read the first installments of the "secret" Khrushchev speech in the local Western press. This account was read with great interest and further stimulated discussions on economic and political problems.

1. It was not until 8 June that the officials received the first newspaper account of the secret Khrushchev speech. They appeared to accept its authenticity despite the fact that they were reading it in the bourgeois Western press. The officials were amazed at the scope of the revelations and were particularly impressed with the amount of detail in the account and its documentary nature. In their usual reading session, they asked one of their members to read all details concerning Lenin's letters of admonition against Stalin. It came as a considerable surprise to them that Stalin

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killed so many of his associates and that he treated Lenin in such a "rough" manner. After all, they argued, it was Lenin who gave Stalin his education in Communism. Stalin, therefore, should have honored Lenin, rather than undermine his prestige by killing his followers. One of the more immediate effects of the speech was to provoke discussion of past and recent events in the light of the new discoveries. Each member appeared to have knowledge of some facts that he felt needed clarification, and it now seemed that the new revelations could help explain them. One official, who had previously exalted Chervenkov, was now making an unflattering comparison between Stalin and Chervenkov. He concluded that both Stalin and Chervenkov had treated their colleagues in a "rough" manner by not permitting criticism of the Party leadership. Another member felt that he could now understand why certain Soviet films presented a distorted view of Zhukov's participation in the Soviet victory during World War II. He pointed out that Zhukov was not even mentioned in such films as "Berlin Assault" and "Moscow Defense." This was a clear case of misleading the people. All the officials seemed to agree that although some of the errors made by Stalin may have been known, Khrushchev was right when he said that no one dared to criticize Stalin for fear of being killed. Despite the officials' avid interest in pursuing the discussion of the denigration of Stalin, such discussion was ruled out of order at one of the weekly cell meetings of the Party. The cell chairman claimed that it was not on the agenda of the meeting, and, therefore, it could not be discussed. The agenda apparently was approved in advance by Sofia.

2. The officials found it hard to accept the charge that all those who were liquidated in the past were enemies of the people. Even if they were enemies, they argued, there was no justification for killing them after they were separated from the Party and neutralized. Now, the officials felt, was an appropriate time to make the necessary corrections in the Party. The guilty should be separated from the innocent, and the Party history should be revised. But even more important, they felt, was the necessity

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for the Party to tell the truth about the Party history. They felt that there were still many incidents which had not been revealed, and had they been revealed when Stalin was alive, the course of events might have been different.

The criticism of Stalin also further intensified the group's discussions of the shortcomings of the Party bureaucracy. All the officials were in agreement that Stalinism had not only had its influence on Chervenkov, but it had had a proportionate effect on the Party, the government and on their own lives. They pointed out how Petko Kunin, a former member of the CPB Politburo, was imprisoned because he dared to criticize Chervenkov. It was also clearer to them now why Chervenkov had reprimanded Gochev, when Gochev urged the Bulgarian writers not to be afraid to criticize even the Central Committee. On the government side, they renewed their former sentiments of the Party's continual bungling in economic matters and its failure to correct the situation. One official went so far as to say that the Communist idea was all right, but its methods were bad. From their own knowledge and day-to-day experience in dealing with the West, they were now aware that Party propaganda had misled them in the past, both in regard to the decadence of the West and to the rate of economic progress in Bulgaria. As a consequence, they felt that they were left isolated in a false complacency, to the point where this isolation could no longer be supported. All around them they saw evidence of megalomania. Even their own lives, they argued, reflected the poverty of the present economic situation. While their superiors drew high salaries and lived a life of comparative luxury, they, as lowerranking officials, could not even afford the luxury of traveling with their wives and children. They were most critical of certain policies of the Party, such as concentration on heavy industry while the population was being starved to death. They felt that the propagandists could hide the misery no longer, for it was a known fact that the people had to wait for hours in long lines even for bread. continual shortcomings and falsehoods of the Party had now made the people apathetic. When Chervenkov submitted his resignation, it was passively accepted.

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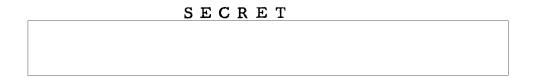
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- 4. In spite of all the evidence of the economic bankruptcy of the Party program and the falsehoods of Party practice seen by these officials in their immediate surroundings, they apparently were convinced that their system would eventually triumph. This belief was expressed even after they admitted that the Party had lost the confidence of the people. It seemed that their simple naivete forced them to believe that there were some latent truths and accomplishments in Marxism-Leninism, even though their own experience had shown very few examples. They conceded that a struggle was going on against them all over the world and that because of their unwise policies the opposition had been gaining strength. In the words of one official, "We always considered. every one of our actions to be right and now we see that most of our actions were to our disadvantage." The officials appeared to be under no illusions as to the meaning of "peaceful coexistence." Although contacts between the two Blocs should be increased, they felt that Communist objectives had to be maintained. All agreed that the two Blocs must remain blood enemies, as Western capitalistic intentions could not be trusted. On a number of occasions the discussions indicated an inexplicable nostalgia for Soviet accomplishments. For example, the officials were impressed with the way Khrushchev handled himself when he visited and spoke with the British industrialists. When they read of Khrushchev's statements to the British regarding Soviet progress in atomic energy and production of new military weapons, they showed considerable pride in the Soviet accomplishments. When they read that Dulles stated that the danger of war with the USSR was receding, this also was well received. Later when they read that Gruenther was resigning from the leadership of NATO, they were convinced that NATO was no longer a serious threat to the USSR. The officials seemed to accept without reservation a statement by one of their colleagues that Soviet diplomacy had been the best and most successful. The only thing that puzzled them was why the Bulgarians allowed themselves to be isolated.
- 5. The news of the Poznan demonstrations drew considerable reaction among the officials. When they read the first reports in

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Western newspapers, their first reaction was that the Polish army had made a mistake in opening fire on the demonstrators while the demonstration was peaceful. All agreed that the economic situation in Poland was bad. Several officials stated that they had heard of similar demonstrations taking place in other satellites. As more newspaper and radio reports came in, the officials found it hard to believe that such an incident could actually take place, and expressed doubts as to the truth of the reports. A visitor to the mission felt that the demonstration was another indication that the people were turning against the Party everywhere. All frankly admitted that the situation in Poland was most serious. They seemed surprised when they heard that the people had received arms from the police. The entire incident, in their opinion, proved that the Party was becoming impotent, and that it had lost its authority with the people. In their opinion, the Party should not have admitted its mistakes in Poland. At this point one of the mission members stated that living standards were even lower in Bulgaria than in Poland, and that the people were suffering more. But he felt that the Bulgarian people had more patience than the Poles, and also they were not used to better things. Of interest was a concluding remark by the visiting member when he stated: "Someday, we will be beaten by the people because of the way we are ruling. We have been torturing the people, and now we have lost them. "

C. Significant Comments

1. Concerning the "Cult of Personality":

"Someone has said that the Communist idea is all right, but the methods are bad. The people are asking questions. In Parliament someone asked Todor Zhivkov, 'Comrade Todor Zhivkov, can you tell me why you became Party Secretary? I can tell you. You became Party Secretary because in one of your reports you mentioned Stalin 78 times and Vulko Chervenkov 320 times. You are now

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going against the cult of personality, while you actually started it. Now Vulko Chervenkov is to be blamed. You are also guilty. Why don't you look at yourself?"

"I say that not only Chervenkov, but even the Party, the administration, and our entire life was influenced by Stalin."

"We are very interesting. All we do is talk. We are very strong in speeches."

2. About the Yugoslavs:

"The Yugoslavs are trying to take advantage of the present situation."

"More or less we are following the Yugoslav line. They like to brag about themselves. This is why they never get anything done."

"I would like to know if the Yugoslav Presidium of the Communist Party had a discussion about collective leadership." (They all laugh)

3. Comments on the deteriorating economic situation:

"We should not teach ourselves exclusively from the Soviet Union because until the Revolution it was a country that stayed behind, as if in the Middle Ages. What caused the 17th of June in Germany?... There are reasons. In East Germany the government tried to take away the workers' rights. This is impossible. Today is for today. The people want to be better off tomorrow than they are today. This is the whole nature of Socialism. If we want to go back, we should expect no success."

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"The people cannot live like this."

"In the beginning the people understood us properly. There was a war and damages, and they could be deprived of many things. But now, many years have passed. We are still lying to the people about war and damages. Twelve years have passed and we still cannot supply the population with goods. Why do we do this?... We have to keep the people in mind and solve their problems. We talk big and nothing comes of it in the end."

4. In regard to the inability of the Bulgarian leaders to remedy the deteriorating situation:

"I think that they see the situation but cannot settle it. I don't know what our rulers think of the situation. It is necessary to take quick action, investigate and arrange. Will they ask the Soviet Union for a loan? Let them do what they want, but at least take quick action. The problem is to avoid reaching an undesirable situation, because the people have already begun to react. This situation has already reached the people's throats. How do such things happen?... This is lost work. We are lost....Our Party has already lost the people's confidence. The people don't believe the Party any longer. They have begun to withdraw from it. people say, 'We don't want words, we want to see some action. The unfortunate thing is that we have lost confidence. I don't see why our rulers don't take some action.... There have already been twelve years, not one or two. We have been in power twelve years."

"We are constructing, but have no results from the construction."

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5.	On the deliberate lies of Party leaders:	
	"A large number of our big leaders started to lie to us. They changed facts around and described our situation in rosy terms. They camouflage and hide the true situation."	
	"We lost the trust of the people and we have to do everything to regain it. We have to tell the truth. The Party has lately become shipwrecked This is because they have lied to the people, and now, even if they say the truth, nobody believes it."	
	"In the end you have to give something to the people because no matter how idealistic we are, as long a our house is not in order"	
6.	On the results of the June 1956 Italian municipal elect	ions:
	"I wonder why the Communists lost strength. A big struggle is going on all over the world against us, and the opposition's strength derives itself from the new Communist policy. See what happened! It is true that the enemies of Communism are powerful!	e
7.	Regarding Khrushchev's "New Course":	
	"Who would believe that the Russians would go to v Tito, Nehru and Eden. Stalin would not have done	
	"The Russians should ask the Americans, 'What downant,' and get down to business."	you
	"This is high politics and we don't understand this. would have thought three or four years ago that we reach such a level when we would go after the capit	would
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SECRET and imperialists after having been blood enemies. However, we must remain their enemies, but we are forced to be nice to them. " Remarks on the brutal purge of innocent victims: 8. "I am sure that history will prove some of these people innocent. I think that now is the right moment to sever the guilty from the innocent." "This should really happen, because in the history of the Bolshevik Party there are mistakes, and this history must be revised, since we now know that it was false. And we must teach ourselves the truth about the Party history." 9. Referring to Soviet policy and its effects: "It is almost unbelievable how much change we have had during the last five years." "I have to admit that before I came here I was under the impression that hunger and misery were the daily bread of capitalist countries. I was under the impression that people were dying from hunger." "Not only you. We all had the same impression." On the failure of the Politburo to curb Stalin: "We wondered why the Politburo allowed Stalin to do these things. Why didn't it criticize or stop him. But

dangerous."

"Is it true that Chervenkov's manners derive a little

of course this thing was not easy. It would be very

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from Stalin's?"

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11. And as for the future:

"Meetings cannot solve these questions. It is clear that there is no bread. They promised to increase salaries, but these are just words. Because we want to live, we cannot refuse the necessities. A family cannot live on a monthly salary of 500 levas. I am telling you that our people are very patient and had confidence in the Party. But some day they will ask us for an accounting, and then you'll see what will happen. We have been torturing our nice people, and now we have lost them."

D. From 24 October 1956 to 15 May 1957

Part D offers an interesting contrast of opinions, largely as a result of the dramatic events in Hungary in late October and the early part of November 1956. Throughout this period a noted change is evident in the intensity of criticism against Stalin and the present Bulgarian leaders. Although there continued to be widescale dissatisfaction on a number of problems, it was apparent that the Soviet intervention in Hungary tended to cause the Bulgarian officials to modify some of their earlier hasty and severe judgments.

1. Statements made just prior to the outbreak of hostilities in Budapest showed awareness that the situation in Hungary was becoming more tense each day. In their usual morning discussion of political events, the Bulgarian officials blamed the Soviet leaders, particularly Khrushchev, for what was taking place. After all, they argued, it was the fault of the Soviet leaders for having waited for Stalin to die before daring to speak against him. Moreover, the Soviet leaders should have been unusually careful not to make mistakes, since they should have known that the repercussions would be bad. As the Bulgarian officials discussed the problem further, they also blamed the Soviet leaders for having made con-

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cessions to the Yugoslavs, who were now taking advantage of Soviet difficulties. Rather than let the Yugoslavs aggravate matters, the Soviet leaders should have taken a strong hand with them from the very beginning. Typical of some of the private remarks that were expressed on this subject were the following:

"During the past year all they have been doing is talking against Stalin and his mistakes, while the country is still ruled by the same people who made the mistakes. They must correct these mistakes, for they have caused the bad economic situation. The people are looking to other persons to correct their mistakes."

"What Khrushchev said during the 20th CPSU Congress was completely different from what he said at Stalin's funeral. How can the people believe him?.... That is exactly what the people want to know; when did he tell the truth. They will even want to know this in the future."

"According to a newspaper account Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich are plotting against Khrushchev. Khrushchev has confused things rather than straightening them out."

- 2. Once the Hungarian uprising broke out in full force, the officials were obviously confused and at a loss to explain it. At first they began to re-emphasize their earlier convictions that serious mistakes were made and that the discontent of Hungarian workers was a prime factor. The officials felt confident that the Soviets would be able to handle the situation, and it was perhaps for this reason that they were most cautious in giving any endorsement to the Nagy government. One Bulgarian official ventured the opinion that some day a similar revolution would take place in Sofia.
- 3. As the Hungarian uprising continued, the officials became more nervous. They eagerly read and discussed what news

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was available in the Western press. The fact that the Bulgarian radio and press sat silently by in the first phases of the fighting was a source of real aggravation. The officials made a number of pointed remarks concerning the lack of reliability in Bulgarian radio and newspaper accounts. The discussions that followed often provoked comments on the shortcomings of the Party. Significant in this respect were comments such as these:

"I don't listen to their Bulgarian/ news on enterprises because I don't believe them. They don't say anything about the two-day-old stale bread which people in Sofia are forced to eat, and about what these people think."

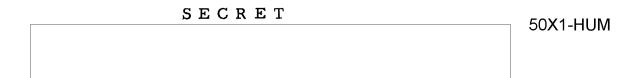
"Who knows what they will write in order to lie to the people, and nobody can tell what is the truth. Radio Sofia and the Bulgarian press often report untruthful events, and afterwards nobody puts it straight.... In Bulgaria they await the arrival of Moscow's Pravda before publishing anything.

Pravda arrives daily at noon, and in the afternoon they prepare the papers for the next day."

"Our Party leaders want everybody to think in the same way as they do. In many instances, I know that decisions reached by village Party committees are revised by area committees. There is no democracy within the Party. The higher organizations must approve anyone who is elected by a lower one. And it is a known fact that many of the delegates who are elected to attend Party congresses are manipulated from above. Some leaders maintain such close connections with their friends that it is difficult to remove them."

"A great deal is spoken about democracy while very little is done. It is much better to take measures in time than let the situation become such as it is now in Hungary. If we don't do this, the people will tell us how to do it....In

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Poland the situation of the workers and peasants was very bad. The same seems to be true in Hungary. This can include all countries of the peoples' democracies...According to the newspapers the Russian people have passed from socialism to communism, but has this actually happened, when Soviet workers are paid so little."

"Instead of simplifying our organization, we have overburdened it and made it more complex. Everyone is apathetic, nobody is interested in anything....Our leaders must straighten out the situation if they want to prevent a similar event in Bulgaria."

- 4. About 30 October 1956 a decided turn took place in the usual morning discussions. Where in the past the economic status of the workers and peasants was largely blamed for the Hungarian uprising, now, more and more, attention was given to the official Party explanation that Western imperialist agents and bourgeois counterrevolutionaries were responsible. The Soviet intervention was now rationalized as a necessity, and the Warsaw Pact was defended as a justification for the return of Soviet troops into Budapest. This change in opinions can undoubtedly be explained by the fear that these officials had that should the Hungarian revolution succeed, their fate in Bulgaria might also be in question. After Soviet troops re-entered Budapest, the officials began to wonder why Soviet troops had waited so long to put down the uprising. From the remarks made, there were clear indications that the officials were pleased that the Yugoslavs gave at least a qualified support to the Soviet action. In discussing the ouster of Nagy, one official summed up his views in these words: "Never mind, it is now much better. So let our men know how to govern, while the others must learn how to obey. That will be much better for the people."
- 5. After Kadar had been re-established in power, the discussions again focused on the errors that would have to be corrected, both in Hungary and in Bulgaria. It was generally agreed that the

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Hungarian "demonstration" served a good purpose, even if it was at the cost of many lives, and had been permitted to last too long. The Party and the Government in both countries would have to improve the economic situation and correct other errors. Speaking of Bulgarian conditions, one official made this observation: "Of course we can talk about all the faults committed in our TKZS's (cooperatives) and about other faults, but we cannot deny all that we have done and start from the beginning again. We must criticize our faults but we cannot deny our achievements." The official went on to point out that the confidence of the people in the Party would have to be restored.

- During the period of January through May 1957, the daily discussion of the officials was largely devoted to current inter-Those items which received most attention were national events. the East-West disarmament talks, the Yugoslav-Soviet situation, the crisis in the Near East, and the economic difficulties in the Soviet Bloc. Comments on the events in Hungary practically ceased. Conversations now concerned those items of interest which, the officials thought, were signs that tensions between the East and West were increasing. For example, such subjects as the testing of nuclear weapons, Soviet military capabilities, United States military preparations, Soviet warnings to NATO countries, and the need for agreements, were frequently mentioned. officials entertained many fixed views and seemed greatly concerned that the United States and Great Britain did not want the friendship of the Soviet Union. If war was to be avoided in the future, they felt that it was imperative that the United States and the Soviet Union reach agreements on disarmament and spheres of influence.
- 7. Some discussions reflected a fairly comprehensive interest in Soviet military preparations, although it was quite apparent that views were probably shaped by what the officials heard on the radio or read in the Party press. They seemed to have no doubts that Soviet capabilities were superior to those of the West. The Soviets,

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one official prophesied, would fight the next war with flying saucers and rockets. Another official recounted how he had read in some paper that in three years the Soviets would have an atom-powered bomber capable of flying at an altitude of approximately 10 miles. A third official went on to point out how Soviet atom tests were responsible for the earthquakes and the cold weather the past few years. The officials also took a lively interest in Chinese developments, taking cognizance of Communist China's growing strength and contacts with the West. They considered China as a power which already dominated the Far East, but was in need of another ten years of peace to build up its strength. While China was building up strength, they believed that it would give the Soviet Union a free hand in Europe.

- 8. As the officials discussed the critical situation in the Near East and the unsatisfactory progress of the disarmament talks, Yugoslavia and Tito were invariably brought into the discussions. Tito was obviously the scapegoat for everything that was going wrong. The officials found it ironical that Tito should find himself in such a good position. By claiming neutrality he could sleep calmly while around him there was fighting. Moreover, they could not understand why Tito was rated as the "greatest Leninist" by some Communist parties. The officials placed the responsibility for Tito's present stature on erroneous Soviet policy during 1955 and 1956. It was the Soviets, they argued, who first opened the door to Tito's opportunism and revisionism. By seeking a rapprochement with him too quickly, Khrushchev made Stalinism a bigger issue than imperialism. In analyzing the situation further, they wondered if Stalin should not have done more than just shake his finger at Tito in 1948. Had not Tito changed his mind in 1948, they felt that things might be different today.
- 9. The same kind of logic was frequently employed in other discussions requiring the officials to reconsider some of their earlier preconceived views. On a number of occasions it was not unusual to hear the officials wonder if they had not been too hard

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on Vulko Chervenkov. Perhaps, also, they felt that they may have been too strong in their condemnation of Stalinism, overlooking the successes that he had achieved. At one point the view was expressed that the overemphasis on Stalinism had weakened the political front of the Soviet Union and the Satellites. One official remarked it caused the Hungarian revolution. Under Stalin, he argued, there was at least stability, but under Khrushchev, there is only talking in circles, and no one knows what is taking place.

- 10. There was some optimism, however, over the proposed industrial changes that Khrushchev was sponsoring in the Soviet Union. These changes were considered as a "real revolution," and it was hoped that the changes would succeed in cutting costs and reducing bureaucracy. The Bulgarian officials looked favorably toward a return of competition between enterprises and an improvement in both local and foreign trade enterprises. It was obvious from the remarks that were made that the officials had an exaggerated notion of the extent of the proposed changes. They understood Khrushchev's proposals to mean a complete decentralization of Soviet industry and a return of "self-management" to factories. They also thought that factory councils would be created to manage the enterprises, but these councils would not be like those in Yugoslavia.
- Il. When the Bulgarian officials heard the first announcements over their radios that Mao Tse-tung had made a speech in which he raised the problem of contradictions between the Party leaders and the people, they considered the speech very interesting and logical. Discussion of the speech prompted a number of comments on criticism and self-criticism and the responsibility for errors. It was generally agreed among them that people on lower working levels were more likely to make mistakes than the leaders because on lower levels Party workers often did not have a complete grasp of the entire situation. In continuing to discuss the question, they reached the conclusion that there was no point in castigating their leaders too much, for even they had their positive sides. This question also elicited some interesting comments and

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unflattering observations concerning the efficiency of the Bulgarian Parliament. The officials agreed that the Bulgarian Parliament was most efficient when it came to making decisions, but they were not so sure it was a body truly representative of the people. One official wondered why proposals were always accepted unanimously, and why the peoples' representatives never said, "My opinion is such and such." In the end, the thought that the peoples' representative actually represented the people, or a group, was considered as quite humorous. The question was pursued no further.

12. Throughout the period under discussion, economic difficulties in Bulgaria continued to be a subject of the greatest importance. It was obvious that this was a problem that not only concerned the officials in their daily activity, but was also a problem that had no immediate prospects of solution. As an indication of the seriousness of only one aspect of economic life, one visiting Bulgarian agricultural expert commented on the deplorable status of meat production. He stated that in the period between 1939 and 1957, there had been no increase in meat production in Bulgaria, despite the fact that the demand for meat was becoming greater each year. With the shift of population to the cities, people in the countryside were being forced to supply higher quotas, thus reducing their own consumption of meat. The expert maintained that unless the bad policies of the agricultural program were corrected, the economic situation would deteriorate completely. As one step towards improvement, he recommended that some incentives, such as the return to the peasants of state forage land, be initiated at once. The agricultural official went on to point out that many of the state farms were operating at a heavy loss, largely due to uneconomical practices and the apathy of state farm workers. In other sectors of the economy, similar conditions were noted. In the foreign trade sector, for example, Sofia policies were blamed for the sale of products to Western countries at a loss in order to get dollar credits to pay off high-interest-rate loans to other satellite countries. Officials found it equally hard to explain why

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Bulgaria was undertaking expensive construction projects in Syria at a financial loss, at a time when much-needed construction was being neglected at home.

Conclusions

- I. Evidence of disillusionment with the present Communist system in Bulgaria is found scattered throughout the conversations. Not only are the mission officials seriously concerned with the deteriorating economic conditions, but they are also alarmed at the inability of the Party leaders to bring about the necessary changes. The record of the Party after twelve years of dictatorship reveals a complete bankruptcy in achieving the goals that it promised the people. Wages are tragically low; consumer goods are in extremely short supply; prices on even basic commodities are out of balance; unemployment is increasing; yet, they say, the Party officials continue to cover their blunders under a cloak of propaganda.
- 2. The comments of these officials seem to plead for an end to this farce, and ask that the past errors of the Party, both in its actions and in its recording of these actions, be corrected. The Bulgarian Communist Party, they feel, is in real danger of permanently isolating itself from the masses, unless the necessary changes can be initiated promptly. The pressures for change go beyond mere economic improvements. There is need for more "democracy" in the Party, they believe, a younger and more aggressive leadership, less subservience to the CPSU and more contact with the West, a slowing down of capital expansion and a vindication of past injustices. This is only a partial list of the changes that seem to be desired.
- 3. The full extent and depth of the disillusionment cannot be accurately measured on the basis of the comments of these officials alone. Living in the West has forced them to change many of their preconceived ideas derived from what their Party leaders wanted them to believe. They seem impressed with the material

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wealth of the West and the frankness of its press. This, however, has not appeared to affect their profound respect for the Communist ideology itself. They expressed amazingly few views negating their basic conviction in the superiority of the Communist ideal. If their system has failed to date, they seem to argue, the cause of failure has been the incompetence of the Party leadership. To the Western mind, such a conviction reflects an unbelievable naivete. They readily admit that there has been much talk and little action, yet none of these Bulgarian officials has a clear perspective as to how the needed changes can be brought about without altering the Communist ideology at the same time. The dilemma that has been posed seems rather simple. On the one hand they appear to admire Soviet diplomacy, and on the other, they cannot understand how Bulgaria has allowed herself to be isolated from the West. Somehow, as if by the application of some magic formula, they expect the right combination of leadership to bridge these two extremes. There appears to be more than one Communist conscience which is disturbed by the deceptive Party propaganda and the poverty of the Bulgarian people.

4. The denigration of Stalin undoubtedly put a "thawing" process into action. Now, perhaps for the first time, Party officials have begun to reexamine the past record of the Party. In so doing, many Party members have become convinced that the Party has lied to them, just as the CPSU has lied to them about their idol Stalin. Each day they see examples of deception which cannot be reconciled with reason and experience. This inevitably results in further questioning, doubting, and disillusionment. In time, it may lead to individual moral crisis of the Party member and a complete rejection of the Communist "faith." There is little doubt, based on fairly reliable indications, that these officials, once exposed to the unsettling self-examination of the post-Plenum days, have continued to view new Party developments critically, even when such skepticism must be more carefully concealed, due to the current "hard line" and Party censorship.

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III. Polish Reactions

The following summaries and conclusions are drawn from selected remarks among a group of Polish officials residing in the West. The summaries are divided into three parts. Part A covers a period of two weeks prior to the 28 June 1956 Poznan riots. Part B contains reactions shortly after the Poznan riots. Part C covers the period from late July 1956 to June 1957.

A. Prior to 28 June 1956.

1. Members of the Polish group made extremely critical remarks concerning political and economic developments in Poland. Coming under particular attack were the grave effects of the Soviet leadership, its involvement in the Stalin denigration, and the implications of these developments on current Polish affairs. The Polish officials deplored the sagging economic situation at home and the inability of the Party leaders to bring about any improvement. It was readily admitted that after twelve years of dictatorship by the Party, the people were still obliged to live at a scandalously low economic level. Even when it was conceded that the Communists took over the Polish government at a very difficult period, no one could now deny that the Communists had made mistakes. All the officials were in agreement that these mistakes could not all be attributed to the effects of the hostile policies being followed by the West, but were essentially the result of internal Party mismanagement. In their opinion, all the monumental construction projects, the copying of everything Soviet and the blind acceptance of Party leadership without criticism were tragic mistakes. The officials appeared in complete agreement that the economic situation was becoming so bad that the human conscience could no longer be required to justify what had taken place in the past, even though the Party is still required to follow and accept the experience of the CPSU. One official commented that even taking into consideration the inevitable difficulties of the period of "transition to Communism", it is still necessary to

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change the inefficient economic system and correct the terrible errors of the past. The economic difficulties cannot be blamed on capitalist pressures; they are entirely the fault of the Communists, with their vast and unnecessary construction projects.

- 2. The officials made several outspoken comments on Stalin. There appeared to be unanimous agreement among them that it was now no longer possible to hide Stalin's past mistakes. There was no doubt in their minds that the effects of the Stalin dictatorship were destructive and that in its course many innocent victims were put to death. One official referred to Stalin as a savage dictator who had gone wild with power. In only a few months he succeeded in destroying some of the best cadres of the party. Now, they said, all the horrible things are seen, but the cause is not evident. Stalin was an idiot who had the power of a dictator.
- 3. In analyzing Stalin's many faults, the officials concluded that he must have had a very distorted picture of life in general. They said Stalin had theories about everything, which coincided only with his own concept of his ideal world. Unfortunately, once Stalin achieved power, he did not know how to apply his theories practically. Because he isolated himself and dared to trust no one, he had no grasp of reality. Everyone took advantage of his vanity and prejudices, including Beria, who kept everyone from him. Stalin came to be feared; even his closest associates dared tell him only what he would like to believe. In due time public opinion was nullified and Party criticism was suppressed. All these developments, they felt, kept Stalin in ignorance of the true situation inside and outside the Party.
- 4. One of the most damaging effects of Stalin's megalomania was the corrupting influence of his methods on leading officials in the Party and the government, and even on the militants of the rank and file. One of the officials commented that although they knew conditions were very difficult they thought everything would

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change in the future, and it was for that that they lived. They accepted and believed everything as if it were Holy Scripture. But, they said, it will not be accepted as Holy Scripture in the future, and they felt that to be a good thing.

- 5. It was clear to these officials that not only the Soviets, but all Communists were responsible for Stalin's deceit and treachery. By flattering Stalin at every opportunity, all Party leaders were in a sense contributing to his many faults. In the end, the Polish officials wondered whether it was really Stalin who was made a fool, or the Party members themselves. In looking back over what had taken place, they found it incredible that not one person in the whole CPSU had enough courage to tell Stalin the truth when he was alive.
- 6. In the light of the new revelations on Stalin, the Polish officials now felt that many questions had been clarified. However, they expressed doubt that any immediate changes would take place within the Party. Although they felt that there were some courageous men in the Party, it was their opinion that the majority of the delegates who attended the 20th CPSU Congress were still Stalinists. One of the officials was disgusted that not one delegate at the Congress dared to offer a single protest during the proceedings. Commenting on the demoralization that had set in, one official remarked that in glaring contradiction to all Communist principles, Party members had become completely indifferent to human suffering. While repeating again and again that the capitalist system depresses the workers, the Communists, according to this official, have in fact been treating their workers even worse, under the excuse that it is necessary under the conditions. This change of attitude, the officials noted, was in stark contrast to the dedicated faithfulness of Communists who had joined the movement at its inception. As a result of years of indoctrination, the formerly dedicated Communists now meekly submitted to the injustices being committed without offering any strenuous protests. The Communist "madness" had now progressed so far that it could not even be explained away by the Party leaders.

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- Undoubtedly, much of the political and moral disillusionment could be attributed to economic factors. As one official pointed out, the workers had made no progress during the Party's reign, and despite all the promises and exhortations, each year they became more enslaved. The economic trend that was taking place was testimony that Communism was defeating itself in Poland and was proving that capitalism was a better system. From their own experience and from what they had learned from relatives at home, they could not understand how a worker could live on 500 zlotys a month under the existing price levels. From the comments made, there could be little doubt that the low economic status of the Polish worker was an irrefutable argument proving the bankruptcy of the Polish Communist utopia. The officials remarked that they should be ashamed to call themselves Communists when the average worker earns only 500 zlotys per month, when after twelve years of "dictatorship of the proletariat" the Polish people are still so badly off. They wondered why the workers should be expected to want the class struggle to continue, and how they could have any hope for the future when year after year they earn only as much as a slave. The low standard of living, they said, is actually destroying Communism.
- 8. On the political side, the Polish officials commented extensively on the deteriorating situation within the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). It was their opinion that unless some form of national movement took place soon, the Party would be in danger of a serious crisis. They felt certain that the leadership of the Party would have to change. As they viewed the internal Party situation, Ochab, who was then leader of the Party, would have to be replaced by someone capable of handling the growing disillusionment. One of the officials felt strongly that only with the return of Gomulka, "an honest man", could any significant changes be expected in the Party leadership. The prospects of Gomulka's return, however, were at that time not considered too likely. There were certain

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reservations among the officials as to whether Gomulka would be completely acceptable to the Polish people and whether he could occupy his former post without first confessing his former errors. But regardless of his prospects, they were convinced that the Party was in urgent need of a new orientation. All agreed that a Party congress should be held at the earliest opportunity and that a complete exposure should be made of past mistakes and injustices.

- 9. One of the most interesting aspects of these political reactions was the criticism leveled at Soviet foreign policy. It was frankly admitted that the Soviet had isolated themselves through their own stupidity. While this isolation could possibly be justified in Lenin's time, the officials felt that there was little justification for it during Stalin's period, or during the current period. Even Khrushchev was severely criticized for his conduct of Soviet policy. There was considerable depth of feeling on this issue. One official said that Stalin's stupidity could not be pardoned, but that the Communists who permitted him to get away with it were idiots too. Khrushchev also was criticized for having the nerve to say that Stalin had made all these mistakes, while making similar mistakes himself.
- 10. It was also evident, on the basis of other remarks, that the Polish officials strongly resented Soviet interference in Polish affairs. In commenting on Soviet omnipotence in determining Polish affairs, one official stated that although the need for collaboration with the CPSU and the utility of their experience could easily be understood, the CPSU certainly had no right to forbid criticism when one saw that something was wrong.

B. From 28 June to 15 July 1956.

1. The 28 June 1956 Poznan demonstration had a serious and disturbing effect on the Polish officials. In the opinion of

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one outspoken critic, it was one of the most serious blows in the entire history of the PZPR. The initial reaction was to discount the press reports as being either exaggerations or provocations, for it seemed incredible that a historically peaceful city like Poznan should suddenly erupt. All of the officials found it hard to accept the failure of the Polish security forces to detect the preparations in advance and to move in immediately before the disturbances started. They viewed the situation as an example of "incompetence and anarchy" within the Party.

- 2. It was readily admitted that one of the most harmful results of the demonstration was the bad political atmosphere created both within Poland and in the West. The timing of the incident was considered most unfortunate, since it came at a time when the Polish economic situation was at its worst. But what the officials seemed to fear most was the adverse affect on their relations with the local emigre groups and on their other propaganda activity. Since many Western observers were present at the Poznan Fair and witnessed the demonstrations, it would not be possible to deny what had taken place. Since the West was already well informed of the reasons for the demonstrations, any official explanation would make them look like "imbeciles". Some officials felt that because of the unfavorable publicity that would follow, a number of scheduled events would have to be cancelled until the atmosphere improved again. For example, much discussion took place as to whether a Communist front congress, to which many exile Poles had been invited, should be cancelled because of possible repercussions from the "reactionary Polish emigration". Concern was also expressed as to how the Poznan affair could be best explained to Western diplomats.
- 3. Some of the individual reactions to the Poznan situation deserve examination. It is interesting to note how reactions to this new situation differed from the previous criticism of the

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Party leadership. Where the Polish officials had previously expressed many reservations about the accuracy of Party reporting and the internal corruption of the Party, their first reaction now was to accept all Polish newspaper and radio accounts of the demonstration as being the truth. They appeared convinced that the demonstration was instigated by the "imperialists" and supported by certain decadent elements outside Poznan.

- 4. One of the more immediate concerns was the security of the installations, since it was feared that hostile emigres would try to break in. A number of steps were taken to increase security, including admonitions to all personnel to increase their vigilance.
- 5. After the Poznan crisis passed, the officials accepted a more sober view of the incident. In discussing the riots among themselves it was stated on a number of occasions that had it not been for "reasons", it would not have occurred. Again it was emphasized that the economic situation was the cause for the present misery, since it had caused the workers to oppose the Party. This was not merely because the Party was in a period of transition and only on the threshold of better times, but was the result of obvious shortcomings in Party leadership. Pointing out the errors in the economic sphere, the officials noted that the constant experiments of the Party were bringing ruin to the country. Not only was the distribution system poor, with extreme shortages even of such a basic item as bread, but also the whole price system was insufferable. On the farms the situation was even worse than in the factories, and there was no question but that the people were generally better off economically under the Fascist occupation. One official repeated the anecdote in which Hilary Minc, Poland's economic boss, arrived in a village and told the people that they were making money and all living at ease under the Communist leadership. To this the people applauded and shouted,

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"Long live Minc and his family on 500 zlotys per month!" In summing up their views, it was agreed that Poznan should serve as an alarm system to the Polish Communist Party that something had to be done.

- 6. When the Polish officials read Western newspaper accounts about the "secret" Khrushchev report, they reiterated their previous opinions that the Russians were to blame for what was happening. After all, they were the ones who were "foolish" for having pretended friendliness and stifled criticism. And because they were foolish, the people could now no longer be held on a leash. The whole world now knew what had taken place in the USSR, for there could no longer be any secrets. But despite this frank condemnation of the CPSU, and the half-hearted approval of the consequences, it was generally agreed that Khrushchev had made a serious error in making the report. In effect Khrushchev had made a fool of himself. What would be the value of telling the world that Stalin had engaged in chicaneries and murdered many of his associates, the officials argued. Who would benefit from these revelations -- certainly not the Satellites. In analyzing all the implications, the officials became greatly disturbed over the present lack of secrecy in the Party and the fact that Western newspapers were exposing everything. This was bad publicity, and it was most unfortunate that the secret Khrushchev report had to come out when it did. It had caused confusion on all levels in the Party, and the knowledge of the masses about Stalin's "nastiness" and crimes could not help the present situation.
- 7. What seemed particularly distressing to them was the disorientation of the Party leaders. This disorientation was not restricted to Polish leaders alone, for even the French, Italian and Belgian leaders had had to go to Moscow to get explanations as to why the Khrushchev Report had not been publicized before.

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Since it was now published, they wanted to know if it was the truth. And because it was first published by the bourgeois press, it opened the doors for a tremendous amount of criticism, with most of it directed against the Party leadership.

- 8. In Poland, the officials admitted, there already was considerable seething against Khrushchev, who reportedly moved about like a bull in a china shop, while Malenkov merely sat around and waited. But even the present Polish leaders seemed hopeless failures. Minc and Mazur, the officials pointed out, were sick old men. Berman, when he retired, supposedly stated, "Good, I will retire, but you are responsible the same as I. " There was also considerable resentment of the meddling of Soviet officials in Polish affairs. For example, during one of Khrushchev's recent visits to Poland, the question of Zambrowski's position arose. The Party in general was reported to be opposed to him, but was required to capitulate when Khrushchev insisted that he be retained. Nor were Polish officials pleased with Khrushchev's conduct during his visits. References were made to his undignified attitude and his heavy drinking.
- 9. This disillusionment with the Party leadership left many Party members completely uncertain of the future. More than one Polish official admitted that no one seemed to know what could or should be done. In the final analysis, it was conceded that the solution would turn on what Moscow wanted, and not what the Poles wanted. The political situation was characterized as "incredibly stormy and a gigantic tragedy divorced from words." One official went so far as to say if he were not a Communist, he would not have faith. "How could one have confidence," he asked a friend, "under these circumstances?"

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C. Polish Reactions: 15 July 1956 to April 1957.

From the general comments and private conversations reported during this period, it is clear that the return of Gomulka as head of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) on 12 October 1956 did not bring to an end, or even appreciably reduce, the growing disillusionment among Polish officials. Although there were some signs of optimism, particularly in public statements, the over-all political and economic situation was still privately viewed with pessimism. Significant in this respect were the following comments and remarks, indicating that despite their deep attachment to the Communist ideology and their strong feeling of anti-Stalinism, many of the Polish officials were still dissatisfied with political developments both inside and outside of Poland.

- 1. In late July 1956 a slight shift was again becoming apparent in the Polish officials' evaluation of the Poznan riots. Now it was becoming more common to hear two different views, one official and the other private. Officially, it was argued that it was Western agents who precipitated the riots. Privately, however, Soviet economic policies and the errors of Polish leaders were held to blame. Polish officials began to have increased fear that if new strikes took place or unemployment increased, more serious economic difficulties could be expected. The Polish economic situation was considered so alarming that an official made the statement that if the public were informed about the economy and the Party's policy, it would "tear the Party to pieces".
- 2. One official in particular seemed dissatisfied with everything he saw. He complained privately that the personnel he supervised were dirty and lazy, satellite representatives were of disreputable character and, in fact, the whole environment suggested apathy and complete indifference. After a short trip to Poland he came back even more dissatisfied, complaining

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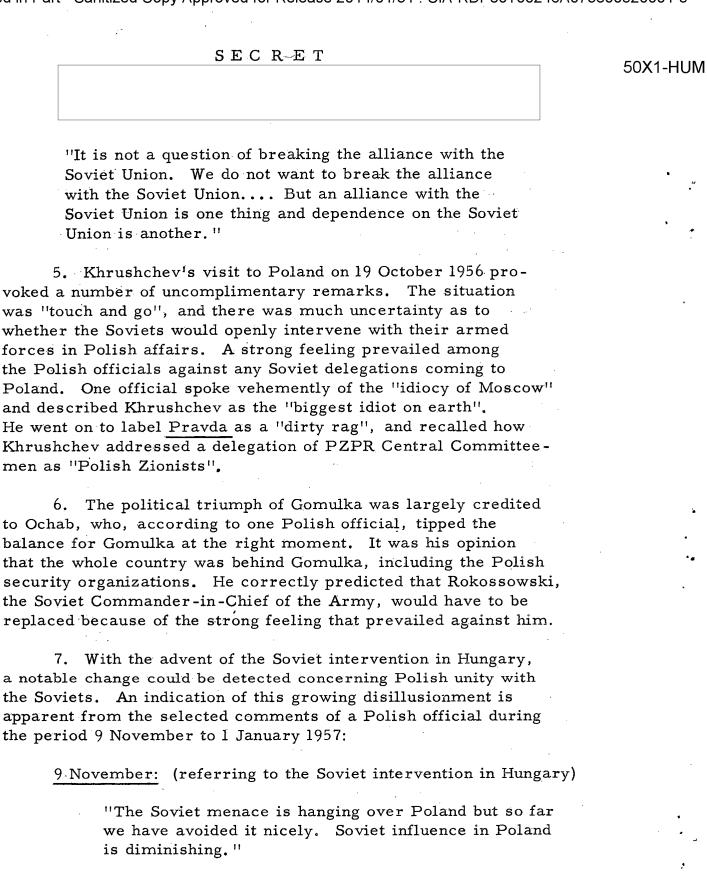
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that the Party was not active enough, the lot of the workers was becoming worse, and general poverty could be seen everywhere. His main criticism was directed at agricultural conditions in Poland and the Soviet domination of all aspects of Polish life. At one point he remarked: "What is the root of all of our difficulties in Poland? We take agricultural products from the peasants by either purchase or requisition. We take their products for nothing and give them nothing in exchange. This is the basis of our economic problems."

- 3. Towards August and September 1956, the views of the Polish official described above became still more cynical. He remarked that the self-satisfaction of the Polish Central Committee was a tragedy. Members of the Party, he noted, were becoming contemptuous and scornful of the rest of the population. To a close associate he confided that Party members were acting like "colonizers" in Poland, and he recalled the declaration once made by Lemin: "When men can no longer live as in the past and when the State can no longer govern as in the past, then the masses begin to stir and become active." Only with the return of a popular figure, such as Gomulka, could the situation be changed.
- 4. After the Gomulka coup had succeeded, a wave of optimism could be noted in the conversations. The general trend of conversation was patriotic and anti-Soviet. Where one official had been most pessimistic in the past, he now remarked that "Poland's fondest hopes had been realized". He went on to point out that although he was satisfied with the new developments in Poland, he did not see how Poland could continue to defy the Soviets. It was his opinion that Gomulka did not want to break with the Soviets. Moreover, a break with Russia was not advisable. As he phrased it, it was not a question of wanting to be dominated by the Soviets, but a question of Socialism:

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30 November:

"Gomulka's popularity and the popularity of the USSR are worsening...the situation in Poland could be worse than in Hungary."

1 December:

"All that has been done up to the present has been done against Polish interests. Nothing has been done for our profit. As long as Poland is not independent, no one will want to talk with us. This is my main conclusion after five years of work."

7 December:

"Gomulka pays no attention to ideology whatsoever. The sins of the past are catching up with us.... How will they get out of this mess. The leaders know nothing about the outside world. Capitalism has shown itself to have an enormous vitality and we are confronted with a situation for which we can find no solution. Don't you feel an impending catastrophe is awaiting this country?"

12 December:

"It would be preferable for Poles to take advantage of American aid."

14 December:

"I am not surprised that for the workers Communism has become synonymous with a government which shoots them down."

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- 8. In January, and in the following months, much of the same opinion was expressed. The only exception was a New Year's speech which was made before an official gathering, at which time the Polish situation was described in fairly optimistic terms. The changes in Poland were characterized as a "fight for a new, freer and a more just way of life". The speaker declared that the PZPR had managed to govern under difficult times, and once again Polish patriotism had saved the country. One week later, however, in discussing the Polish situation with a friend, the same official described the situation as disintegrating and bemoaned the poor salaries, the living conditions and morale of Polish workers. Two weeks later he was able to find considerable fault with Gomulka's leadership. He accused Gomulka of being a weak leader and incapable of making decisions. Gomulka, he added, was not an experienced politician and everything he was doing was in opposition to the Party's program. Fortunately for the Party, it had some old leaders who were well qualified and able to give Gomulka some support. The Polish official was also concerned with members of the Sejm (Polish parliament) who he felt were acting as demagogues, making promises to everyone. If the members of the Sejm continued in this vein, he predicted that the Sejm would make itself the center of struggle against popular democracy. Not only the country, but the Party was in chaos. Gomulka, the official added, was contributing by falsifying statistics to make the situation appear better than it actually was.
 - 9. In the early part of 1957 there were indications that anti-Semitism in Poland was becoming worse than ever before. The situation, in the opinion of one official, was becoming scandalous. He thought that Polish leaders were publicly inviting anti-Semitism, with the purpose of stifling democratization in the country. He felt that anti-Semitism was not actually a real problem, as the number of Jews in Poland was practically insignificant. The persecution of the German minority, in his opinion, was a far greater problem.

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Conclusions

- 1. The candor and bitterness reflected in the reactions can leave little doubt that many Polish officials were extremely critical of the political-economic situation in Poland even before the June 1956 Poznan Riots. This bitterness increased notably with the release of the "secret" Khrushchev Report and with the demonstrations at Poznan. The over-all effect was to focus sharper attention on the record of the PZPR leadership over the past twelve years. In the opinion of these Polish officials, it is a shameful record of economic failure. The balance sheet adds up to practically zero and living conditions are worse after all these years of Communist rule today than they were under German occupation.
- Even some ardent and loyal Communist Party members have not accepted the results passively. There is evidence of extreme disillusionment in their statements, very similar in tone and substance to that of the Bulgarian officials. The similarity is striking, even to the point of the individual criticisms of the leadership and the causes of the economic difficulties. Both reactions seem to suggest that many Party members are aware that to date the Party program has not been favorably received by the workers. With the passing of each day, they see more examples of this steadily deteriorating situation, to the point where the Party has made the worker its direct enemy. In the eyes of these officials, the blame rests squarely with the Party leadership, because its stupidity brought about the crisis. Now this leadership seems incapable of finding a solution other than re-applying the old Marxist-Leninist formulas which have been used ineffectively in the past.
- 3. The discussions offer no clear insight into the significance or depth of this undercurrent of disillusionment. On the surface these appear to be the voices of individuals who are confused and disturbed. None of the conversations seem unusually

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analytic or critically introspective as to what should be done to put the Party back on the right track again. In most cases the criticism is destructive rather than constructive, and the main theme seems to be the need for change. Judging from the discussions, this change should involve some form of political concessions and economic recovery. Unprofitable enterprises should be abandoned, wages should be raised, prices lowered; in short, the standard of living needs immediate adjustment. Other changes also seem to be indicated, particularly greater internal Party democracy, greater independence from the Soviets, correction of past injustices and a younger and more competent leadership. These changes, if accepted, would supposedly bring about an economic and political relaxation and a certain amount of independence from the USSR, both desperately needed at this time to bring the Party closer to the masses.

These discussions leave the impression that Party members are finding it increasingly difficult to justify Party practice with their own consciences. Conscience often forces them to rebel against the errors of the Party, the existing poverty, the false hypocrisy of Party propaganda and the brutality of the system. But faith forces them to accept all these shortcomings in the name of ideology. Thus, there appears to be a struggle between ideology and practice, between ends and means. To many, it seems inconceivable that after twelve years of dictatorship the Party has nothing to show for itself but workers who hate the very system that was forced upon them to give them economic freedom. They apply the official stock answers -- the failure to achieve ends can be attributed to poor leadership. Khrushchev is a "clumsy elephant", Rakosi is a "bandit", Zawadski is an "incompetent"; nevertheless, their basic conviction that the Communist utopia can be attained, if given proper leadership, remains unshaken. Nor is their own sense of selfrighteous indignation altered. It seems ironical that while they deplore the deceptions and machinations of their superiors, they themselves, in their day-to-day activity, are often found fanatically devoted to perpetuating the system's errors.

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